



News Release

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor

Michael S. Steele
Lt. Governor

Mary Ann Saar
Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mark Vernarelli
(410) 339-5065

“DIMINISHING RETURNS OF INCREASED INCARCERATION”

NATIONAL REPORT CITES MARYLAND’S COMMITMENT TO BETTER CLASSIFICATION OF INMATES AND COMMITMENT TO PAROLEES

TOWSON, MD (August 16, 2004)—Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. and the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services have been praised in a national study just released which focuses on states which are “reducing the costs of their prison systems without jeopardizing public safety.” The report, ***Diminishing Returns of Increased Incarceration***, was conducted by the JFA Institute, Washington-based researchers who study the nation’s correctional and criminal justice systems.

Maryland’s Division of Correction has reduced its prison population by nearly 500 since June 2002, in part by better classifying inmates when they enter the system, and placing more low-risk offenders in pre-release centers. The report hails these tactics and credits the Maryland Parole Commission for expediting parole hearings and better identifying and tracking low-risk offenders.

It is well documented that more than 95% of American inmates will one day return to their communities. Governor Ehrlich and Public Safety and Correctional Services Secretary Mary Ann Saar are reshaping corrections policy in Maryland to better prepare inmates for a successful return to their home communities. This new philosophy is called RESTART: Reentry, Enforcement, and Services Targeting Addictions, Rehabilitation and Treatment. It will begin at two pilot sites, the Maryland Correctional Training Center near Hagerstown and the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in Jessup.

--more--

Governor Ehrlich, who has made public safety one of the five pillars of his administration, has shown strong support for expediting the processes leading to speedy releases for low-risk offenders. The report recognized this by stating, "When a new governor was elected in Maryland, he made it clear that he wanted to change the way the state's prison system operated. His Secretary of Public Safety...launched a number of initiatives to stop the growth in the prison system and reduce recidivism rates."

"It is always gratifying when Maryland is recognized as being in the forefront of any public policy," said Governor Ehrlich. "But it is particularly important when that issue is one which affects our state both fiscally and in terms of making our neighborhoods safer."

Said Secretary Saar: "We cannot wait for the problem of recidivism to fix itself. The most dangerous path is to do nothing at all. Providing inmates with drug treatment, education, and job skills is the surest path to ensuring the safety of our communities. If you stop the revolving door of criminals reentering the prison system time and again, you will get the desired result, which is lower crime rates."

The JFA Institute receives funding from state, federal, and local government agencies, as well as foundations interested in developing and evaluating innovative crime prevention, law enforcement, sentencing, and correctional policies and programs. For more information, visit their web site at www.jfa-associates.com.

###

Providing New Paths to Public Safety